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SUBJECT: ISLAND BIODIVERSITY MAIN THEM AT CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY SCIENTIFIC MEETING

1. Summary: The Tenth Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological advice (SBSTTA) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was held in Bangkok on February 7-11, 2005. The main goal of the meeting was to develop a program of work on island biodiversity. Other major themes included further development of indicators to assess progress toward meeting the "2010 goal" for significant reduction of loss of biological diversity, and to measure progress toward several agreed upon "targets." Parties also agreed on terms of reference for an Ad Hoc Technical Experts Group on climate change and biodiversity. As previously in SBSTTA meetings, political issues surrounding traditional knowledge and access and benefit-sharing dominated the thematic discussions, and posed a significant challenge to achieving agreement on substantive scientific and technical biodiversity issues. Once again, U.S. status as a non-Party complicated delegation efforts to secure USG objectives. Working diligently on the margins, the U.S. delegation was able to secure all key USG objectives. Australia remains the primary U.S. ally, followed closely by Canada and New Zealand; it would not have been possible to secure U.S. objectives without their active support. End summary.

Island Biodiversity

2. With participation from about twenty island countries, in particular Pacific Islands, a skeletal program of work (POW) on Island Biodiversity was agreed. The POW adapts CBHD's global targets to island-specific priority actions. The actions remain at the general level; more specific "supporting activities" will be negotiated at COP8. Overall, the draft POW meets USG objectives such as encouraging the use of integrated, ecosystem approaches, such as White Water to Blue Water, promotes broadly inclusive participatory processes and strengthens science-based decision-making. Outstanding issues revolve around Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) related issues and the "rights" of indigenous and local communities.

Indicators and Targets

3. The development of a common set of indicators was considered for assessing progress towards the 2010 Target of significantly reducing biodiversity loss. Indicators for immediate use had general support, while there was some disagreement on five additional indicators proposed for immediate testing. The gap between theory and practical reporting of the indicators was stressed, and delegates called for a detailed description of each. Additional comments included the need for flexibility in reporting and especially on the use of various sources of data suited to countries. Linkage of reporting to national reporting and to the Global Biodiversity Outlook was also requested. Parties agreed on "Ecological Footprint" as an additional indicator for development as well as some investigation of biodiversity indicators of climate change.

4. The CBD is working to integrate "targets" for achieving actions into the different programs of work. Draft Global Outcome-Oriented Targets for the Programme of Work on Inland Waters and on Marine and Coastal Biological Diversity were developed based on the Global targets adopted at COP7. Targets such as "at least 10 percent of each of the world's known inland waters ecological regions effectively conserved" and a similar target for the marine environment were supported by

Parties. The U.S., working with others, managed to successfully rebuff attempts to expand this target to areas beyond national jurisdiction (e.g., high seas). The U.S. also emphasized the idea that marine protected areas (MPAs) are only one of a suite of management options that can achieve marine conservation goals.

Climate Change: Terms of Reference of an Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group (AHTEG)

15. Australia and New Zealand, supported by the U.S., pushed for deferral of consideration of an AHTEG on adaptation, noting that work on adaptation under the UNFCCC was still at a very early stage. Despite those concerns, the SBSTTA established an AHTEG on Biodiversity and Climate Change and agreed to a Terms of Reference. The AHTEG will undertake an assessment of the integration of biodiversity considerations into the implementation of climate change adaptation activities. The work of the AHTEG will be completed in time for consideration by SBSTTA-11.

Agricultural Biodiversity

16. GURTS (Genetic Use Restriction Technology): Canada, supported by Australia and New Zealand, staunchly objected that the report of the GURTS Ad Hoc Technical Experts Group (AFTEG) was presented as a consensus report when, in fact, consensus on the recommendations at the AHTEG meeting had not been achieved. A paper developed at SBSTTA reiterated that the SBSTTA body could not reach consensus on the report and recommended that the Conference of the Parties urge Parties to conduct further research on impacts and support capacity building. Certain NGOs condemned the SBSTTA recommendations saying that they "leave the door wide open" to GURTS; however, the U.S. found this outcome positive.

17. Nanotechnology Side Event: The ETC Group hosted a side meeting to present information on the implications of nanotechnology for human health and the environment as well as the potential risks to biodiversity and agriculture. They stressed that there is a lack of mechanisms for assessing and regulating potential environmental and health risks. The ETC Group called for an international regulatory body to evaluate all new emerging technologies, particularly nanotechnology.

18. Cross Cutting Initiative on Biodiversity for Food and Nutrition: The scope for a new initiative on biodiversity for food and nutrition, to be developed in conjunction with FAO, IPGRI and other relevant organizations, was generally welcomed by Parties. U.S., Canadian and Australian views were that the initiative remain within the scope of the CBD, does not duplicate existing initiatives, and takes a balanced view of conservation and developments aspects. For the time being, these criteria have been met; however, we will need to closely monitor progress.

19. International Soil Diversity Initiative: Parties supported the framework for an International Soil Biodiversity Initiative that would help raise awareness and promote understanding of soil biodiversity and ecosystem services. The U.S. was supportive of suggestions that the Initiative support conservation and sustainable use of soil biodiversity in terrestrial systems, and not be restricted only to agriculture.

Perverse Incentives

10. This sleeper issue became one of the most contentious at the meeting with Argentina adamantly opposing recommendations on this issue, apparently echoing their concern with incentives in other fora. Disagreement on whether the recommendations provide a step-by-step approach to removing or mitigating perverse incentives or provide only a conceptual outline pitted the EC and EU members against Argentina and New Zealand. Agreement was reached only with respect to

bracketing the recommendations and sending them down the line for further work at a later time.

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

11. The MA draft executive summary for biodiversity was presented for review by SBSTTA, and comments were taken from the floor. While there are not any contentious issues, general sentiment was that the quality of the MA has been highly variable. Comments may be incorporated by the authors, and the report will be revisited at SBSTTA-11.

Clearing House Mechanism (CHM)

12. On the role of the CHM in Promoting Technical Cooperation, the U.S. emphasized the use of common reporting formats for information sharing on biodiversity so that they are compatible, particularly for development of global and regional networks. We were successful in including these issues in the Draft Recommendations of the SBSTTA and in the Asia-Pacific CHM Meeting Report, held just prior to SBSTTA, as key to promoting technical cooperation and facilitating information exchange to meet the 2010 targets.

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